



...I have  
taught myself  
joy, over and  
over again.

Joy, being a feeling, must arise on its own. Unable to dictate what emotions we will have, we are left only with the power to create conditions within which we might experience happiness or bliss. This is no small ability; our capacity to influence the present moment is profound.

Opportunities to teach ourselves joy are within our reach.

We must teach ourselves joy when exhaustion narrows the width of our wonder. When the tasks we face overwhelm the energy we possess, it is difficult to see sources of joy in the world around us. Grief too can limit our ability to know delight as awareness of that which is absent overrides attentiveness to what is present. When tired or sad, joy may be distant.

We can teach ourselves joy through focused discovery. Joy often resides in tiny examples of beauty, creativity, or surprise. When we notice the color of a bird's crest, or the satisfaction of an author's insight, or the peace that radiates in a moment of meditation, prayer or other deep connection, we may learn joy. When examples of awe are fleeting, we can search for small signs of grace.

We can teach ourselves joy by recalling or imagining. When we remember what has brought us joy in the past, we bring our whole life's collection of experience to counter a current instance of discouragement. When we create images of what we might shape in the future, we bring our broad capacity to choose and to change to meet a present moment of distress.

With discovery, memory, and inspiration, we can set the stage for rejoicing.

*What small example of beauty can I notice today? What has brought me happiness in the past?*

Barbara Kingsolver  
(b. 1955)  
Novelist – *High Tide in Tucson*